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makes me forget all the glories of the greatest art, because it moves my heart. Not that I despise the mighty monuments of times past, but that real life moves me more deeply when it presents itself to me in such a form, and especially—egotist that I am!—when it comes wrapped round in the enchanting witchery of a subject for a picture.

AN ARTIST'S IDEA OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND ENVIRONS.

THE East has always been the peculiar ground of the artist. Thence he has drawn his most rich materials. Martin, and Turner, and many others have made us familiar with much that is great and splendid in the fields and hills of Orient, now to be made further familiar as the scene of military operations. It is pleasing, however, to turn from the terrible stories of "our own correspondent," narrating all the horrors of war, starvation, and cholera, to the views of an artist. Mr. F. Hervé visited the land some time back as a portrait painter, and brought back, not only rich sketches of the country, but communicated much pleasing information.

He visits the place to paint; and hence it is natural that he should tell us, that though there are few spots in Europe which have called forth more panegyrics than the charms of the Bosphorus, yet the reality far surpasses all preconceived ideas. The position, the very sensation that you are between the extreme points of the great divisions of the globe known as Asia and Europe, is enough to rouse the mind to a certain degree of enthusiasm. It is hard to say on which side most beauty lies.

You gaze on palaces of the purest white marble, with doors of bronze and gilded cornices, tall minarets, rising with chaste and taper elegance beside the round and massive tower, light trellises, shaded terraces, latticed windows, all savouring of mystery and romance. Then you turn from the present to the past, as your eye catches a sight of the heavy castles of other times, with their gloomy turrets frowning on each other from the opposite banks as they peer up in solitary grandeur—here a fantastic and ephemeral style of architecture, there a heavy massive line of solid walls and lofty towers, which raise their proud heads on high.

Every form of habitation is to be found in the Bosphorus, from the habitation of the peasant to the palace of the monarch. There is the lowly fisherman's shed, formed of a few planks, pitched up and plastered together with mud and clay, with a hole to creep in and a hole to look out from, the waves oft dashing against its base, and the rain entering its roof; whilst not far off stands the Sultan's gorgeous palace, where the sculptor's art is profusely displayed, where gaudy painting and the richest carved work unite their powers to adorn the splendid monument of Ottoman pride, and its polished marble walls, its granite balustrades, its porphyry columns, are crowned by a resplendent crescent of gold. All this may outrage the pure and classic eye of the chaste architect, for we know that it is in bad taste; but the effect is most brilliant and imposing; and as there is a succession of these palaces on either shore, when the sun shines upon them, it produces one dazzling blaze of eastern magnificence.

But art alone has not lent enchantment to the view. It is not possible for us to comprehend, here at home, what nature is under the

"Blest power of sunshine!"

in a land where it may be truly said, on many occasions:

"There was not, on that day, a speck to stain
The azure heaven; the blessed sun alone,
In unapproachable divinity,
Careered, shining in his fields of light.
How beautiful, beneath the bright blue sky,
The billows heave!—one glowing green expanse;
Save where, along the bending line of shore,
Such hue is thrown, as when the peacock's neck
Assumes its proudest tint of amethyst
Embathed in emerald glory."

And all this lights up a place gifted by nature with almost sublime charms. It is nature that has given the bold and varied outline,

the rocky mazes and the myrtle bowers; she it is that gives us that gigantic and overshadowing plane-tree, the growth of centuries, and the shelter of thousands of men and herds, to gaze at and admire. See the rugged oak, the spreading elm, the weeping ash, the bright sycamore, the dark-green fig, the stately cedar, the orange, the lemon, the soft acacia, the trembling aspen, the drooping willow, the sable yew, the tall poplar, and, the loftiest of all, leaving every other far beneath, the sombre cypress, rears its aspiring stem. And then, above, there is the almost bare rock, clad at times by the hardy pine of the North.

And then, besides these and many other trees, there are fruit-trees innumerable. The mulberry and the vine are the most frequent. The latter climbs about the awnings and palisades in all directions, and producing, in almost all parts of the East, a vile compound, has been the fertile source of death in our army. The shrubs are endless and innumerable; the laurel, the myrtle, the box, the arbutus, and laurastinus are everywhere to be seen. Of the flowers it would be in vain to attempt to speak.

The palaces, harems, and villas of the rich Turk—less frequent now than in Hervé's time—and of the foreign merchants, are a graceful and pleasing addition to the beauties of nature. Their gardens are perfectly fairy-like in many instances. They surround the dwellings, and then go back, getting wilder as they ascend, until they, too, reach the barren crag. There they rise, terrace after terrace, communicating by winding steps, often of marble, with beds of flowers and dark-green shrubs rising on all hands; and then the bowers, arbours, alcoves, obelisks, kiosks, pagodas, fountains, temples, awnings, lattice-worked screens and trellises.

Elsewhere upstart the blue cupolas of a mosque, half hid by an umbrageous curtain of trees, except where the fluted minarets rise alongside the dark trees. And then from some window peers a dark-eyed Greek girl, watching the boats as they pass; or an Armenian or Turkish lady darts a modest look and drops her eyes; while Turks smoke lazily near the water, boats richly carved and gilt float by, filled by men in embroidered costumes, though now, in general, the European garb is alone seen. The boatmen, however, still preserve their old dress.

Well, and with all this beauty of scenery, with such a sky, and such temptations, neither Turks, nor Greeks, nor Armenians, nor Jews, nor any other of the mixed and nondescript dwellers in Turkey have the slightest conception of art, or the slightest leaning towards a study of it. The Greeks are very behindhand. They neither comprehend music nor painting, as the daubs in the inside of their churches will readily show. As to music, some Souliots were once singing very sweetly the air of "Il Pescatore," and an American, remarked to a Greek friend how well they did it. His reply was curious. "They sing well indeed! they have some knowledge as to using their mouth, but they have no idea whatever of using their noses!" It is through the nose that the Greeks usually sing.

There have been many young Greeks sent to Europe to learn various accomplishments. Singing and painting they could never compass. We have heard Greek singing enough, and the less we hear for the future the better. What half a century of civilisation may do we know not, but the arts are nowhere in so deplorable a state as amid the ruins of temples and monuments in Greece, in Athens itself, and in the country of the Turk, where religion sets its face against every form of the art of painting and sculpture.

The prejudice is wearing away, however, and this—like everything else—denotes that there is a crisis of civilisation about to take place. The presence of the allied armies may be the cause of Turkey awaking to real civilisation, literature, and the arts, and finally to Christianity—not the Christianity of Greeks and others in Turkey, but to the purer Christianity of countries where civilisation has gone hand-in-hand with religion. Then may we hope to see even high art taking root in a country formed by nature for all that is lovely and great, and they too may produce works from which

"We gaze and turn away, and know not where,
Dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart
Reels with its fulness; there—for ever there,
Chained to the chariot of triumphal art,
We stand as captive, and would not depart."

As one indication of the approach of a better state of things, we may mention that, as the French army in the East is accompanied by Horace Vernet—whose business is to produce worthy pictorial representations of any striking scenes, any remarkable objects, and any brilliant exploits that may meet his view—so Omar Pasha has an artist in attendance upon him for a similar purpose, who is said to be engaged upon a painting of the siege of Silistria, that glorious struggle in which Turkish valour, assisted and directed by the English skill of the gallant Lieutenant Butler and his friend, effectually repelled all the attacks of a Russian horde, in spite of a great disparity in numbers. It may, perhaps, be some time before Omar Pasha's enlightened views on general subjects and just appreciation of the value of art are shared by the mass of the subjects of the Sultan; but the influence of his example, seconded by the high position he deservedly holds in the estimation of all, must, sooner or later, bring about this desirable result.

THE EXHIBITION OF THE ART UNION.

SOME of our readers may smile at the fact of an exhibition of the Art Union of London being included in matter, great part of which relates to the works of EMINENT MASTERS. But the article will not be so irrelevant as it might upon the first blush appear.

The object of our work is to cultivate amongst all classes in this country a taste for the beautiful, and the beautiful includes, according to the sententious German, the good! It is not unnatural, therefore, that any glaring departure from the rules of Taste and of True Art should be noticed and reproved, for it is by reproof that education is promoted, and by the example of the bad that the good is inculcated.

Very few people are ignorant of the constitution of the Art Union. It is a society, instituted in 1837, and incorporated in 1846, having for its object a promotion of the knowledge "and love of the fine arts, and their general advancement in the British Empire by a wide diffusion of the works of native artists," and also "the elevation of art and the encouragement of its professors, by creating an increased demand for their works, and an improved taste on the part of the public."

That an institution having so generous and so great an aim, should have so signally failed, as this and other exhibitions will show, is more to be deplored than to be wondered at. Taste requires education, and is by no means a mere natural production. It requires also time to grow. It is not to be presumed, that because a man or a woman wins a prize at the Art Union, they should be sufficiently judges of pictures to select the most meritorious out of so many galleries; and the fortunate prizewinner has the Royal Academy, the British Institution, the Society of British Artists, the National Institution, the Water Colour Society, and the New Association of Painters in Water Colours, to select from. It might probably happen that if the fortunate or unfortunate prizewinner had only one gallery to choose from, something like a good selection might be made; but under the present system the body of prizewinners, with a perverseness which is puzzling, clear the whole of the galleries of their dross and refuse.

It is another unfortunate circumstance that the drawing of the Art Union takes place very late in the year. Therefore, if there be a good picture by a rising artist, prizewinners are pretty sure not to get it, because buyers of taste and of art education have had the run of the galleries before them; and, moreover, to render, we suppose, any collusion between the buyer and the seller impossible, the committee of the institute have framed their by-laws in such a manner that one may be construed into a direct prohibition of the prizewinner's using any judgment other than his own—a good rule in some respects, but exceedingly injurious in others.

Thus it is, that the result is frequently very seriously injurious and noxious to British art. Those who have to choose the pictures are of all classes, and the sellers of the pictures are as various. Some there are who get a pretty good painting; but the majority are so bad, that the effect of the gallery to an eye accustomed to good art, is really very sad indeed. But, besides this evil, the Art Union has another effect. It disheartens the artist who may be

very clever, but may *not* have sold his picture, when he sees one with not a tithe of the talent which he has, get for his production a price which is preposterously high. But it has a worse effect upon the artist who sells his painting. Having an eye to the Art Union prizewinners, he has put an enormous price on his production, because he is just as likely to get it as a smaller one. Judges do not buy his pictures—but others do; and the prizewinner must give the full price, or else return part of it into the reserve fund of the society. We happen to know a case, wherein a young artist asked £200 for a picture exhibited in the Royal Academy, purposely to catch the Art Union prizewinners—a work for which, had a dealer bought it, he would gladly have taken £50. He sold his picture; and it so elated him, that his works had such prices put on them that he never sold any more. He is now in one of the English colonies, taking portraits, and gaining a very fair living; but a great or even a talented artist he never will be.

The pictures, also, on account of the advertisement which their exhibition affords, are obliged to be exhibited, and therefore to be chosen from exhibitions of the current year. Artists are not, consequently, allowed to paint upon commission; but, if they were permitted to do so, surely something more creditable might be obtained. In a word, as a purpose of art education for the spread of taste, this society is a dead failure; and, although it undoubtedly gets rid of a great many pictures, still there is not one out of the one hundred and ninety-nine exhibited, for which we would give—and we believe there is no professional person in London would—half the price which the artist has obtained for it. From this censure we may, however, except three; and also the lithograph by Maguire; and the whole of the statuary models, from 195 to 199, both inclusive.

A hasty run through the gallery will, we have no doubt, convince the reader of the truth of remarks which, however harsh, have for their aim the advancement of art and the improvement of taste. The society ought, without any hesitation, to remodel their rules; so that it might be an honour, instead of the reverse, to be selected by a prizewinner of the Art Union.

The present exhibition is held in the rooms of the Suffolk-street Gallery. In the great room the first picture which attracts the visitor will be, in all probability (No. 4), "Common Fare," painted by Mr. Sidney Cooper, and selected from the Royal Academy at the very large price of £367 10s. Mr. Cooper is a first-rate artist when combined with Mr. Lee as a landscape-painter; but in "Common Fare," which represents a group of sheep and a half-starved donkey on a common, he, to a certain extent, fails. The landscape is unpleasant; the position of the donkey, on the apex of a hillock in the centre of the picture, being too prominent; and the effect is, on the whole, unpleasant. Parts of the picture are unexceptionable; the sheep are excellently painted. The amount of the prize is £250, the prizewinner having added the remainder.

(No. 13), "Gipsies leaving the Common," by E. Williams, sen., for which a gentleman has given £60, is a very common specimen of a picture manufactured without the slightest attention to nature; vivid colours and crude greens being the staple commodity.

(No. 19), "A Scene from the Play of the Hunchback," by A. J. Simmons, has, luckily for the artist, fetched £40. Had it to be sold in any sale to-morrow, it might realise £10.

(No. 21), "The Lady of Shalot," by R. S. Lauder, R.S.A., has been chosen from the new institution at a price of £80. It bears the quotation from Tennyson:—

"But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights."

But it is in reality nothing but a very pallid specimen of humanity, with a pretty but unmeaning face, looking into a mirror. What relation it bears to Tennyson's mystic poem we cannot say.

(No. 22), which hangs just below, is a contrast in every particular. It is a sweet landscape, "Evening on the Mackno, North Wales," with a wild duck flying quickly over the still waters of a lake. The colour and the feeling are both good. The taste exhibited in the choice of this does honour to Mr. Allen. The price affixed by the artist, Mr. Dearle, is twenty pounds.

(No. 26), "Game and Fruit," by Duffield, is a very fine picture, which we noticed when before exhibited. We would particularly